

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 05133 260655Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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R 251501Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5381
INFO AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 5133

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, PBOR, ET, SO
SUBJECT: GERMAN ASSESSMENT OF WAR IN OGADEN

REF: USDAO/PARIS 200854Z AUG 77

SUMMARY: FRG DEFENSE ATTACHE BELIEVES THAT, UNLESS SOMALIA IS WILLING TO GIVE UP FICTION THAT WAR IN OGADEN IS BEING CONDUCTED BY ETHNIC "FREEDOM FIGHTERS," AND IS PREPARED TO COMMIT ALL ITS REGULAR FORCES WITHOUT SUBTERFUGE, SOMALIA WILL SOON LOSE INITIATIVE IN HARARGHE, BALE, AND SIDAMO FIGHTING AND ULTIMATELY LOSE WAR. HE ALSO CONFIRMS ARRIVAL IN ADDIS OF CUBAN MILITARY ATTACHE AND IMMINENT ARRIVAL OF GDR MILITARY ATTACHE. END SUMMARY.

1. DISCUSSING CONDUCT OF WAR WITH POLCOUNS, FRG DEFENSE
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PAGE 02 ADDIS 05133 260655Z

ATTACHE LT COL DETLEV VON MUENCHOW FELT THAT SOMALIA, WHETHER FOR DIPLOMATIC REASONS OR BECAUSE IT WAS UNDERESTIMATING ETHIOPIAN MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS, HAD MADE SEVERAL BASIC MISTAKES. SHOULD SOMALIA ADHERE TO ITS HITHERTO LIMITED TACTICS AND FAIL TO ENGAGE ENTIRE STRENGTH OF ITS ARMED FORCES, HE IS CONVINCED THAT ETHIOPIA WILL SUCCEED IN HOLDING THREE CRUCIAL CITIES

OF DIRE DAWA, HARAR AND JIJIGA, AND ULTIMATELY IN TURN-
INT TIDE OF BATTLE IN EPMG FAVOR.

2. ACCORDING TO VON MUENCHOW, SOMALIA HAD BECOME TO
OVERCONFIDENT AS RESULT OF ITS EARLY SUCCESSES THAT
IT NEGLECTED TO DEVELOP ADEQUATE LOGISTIC AND COMMUNI-
CATION SUPPORT FOR ITS UNITS IN FIELD. AS EXAMPLE,
HE CLAIMED THAT SOMALIA HAD BEEN SO CERTAIN OF VIC-
TORY WHEN LAUNCHING ITS ATTACK ON DIRE DAWA AUG 16
THAT IT MADE NO PROVISIONS TO ASSURE ADEQUATE TURNAROUND
FUEL CAPABILITY TO GET ITS TANKS INTO AREA AND BACK OUT
AGAIN, ON ASSUMPTION THEY COULD REFUEL IN DIRE DAWA
ITSELF. FOR THIS REASON ALONE, WHEN BATTLE TURNED
AGAINST SOMALIS, IT HAD BEEN POSSIBLE FOR ETHIOPIANS
TO CAPTURE SOMALI TANKS INTACT, AFTER LATTER RAN OUT OF
GAS AND WERE DESERTED BY THEIR CREWS.

3. VON MUENCHOW WAS INCLINED TO ACCEPT EPMG CLAIM OF
18 SOMALIA AIRCRAFT DESTROYED AND BELIEVED THAT
LOSSES OF SUCH MAGNITUDE WERE ONE OF PRINCIPAL REASONS
WHY SOMALI OFFENSIVE IN OGADEN WAS BEGINNING TO BOG
DOWN. HE HAD HEARD THAT TWO ETHIOPIAN F-5'S HAD BEEN
LOST IN FIGHTING TO DATE. (ETHIOPIAN SOURCES HAVE
ADVISED EMBASSY THAT SEVENTEEN MIG'S DOWNED IS CORRECT
FIGURE, AND THAT ONLY ONE ETHIOPIAN F-5 HAS SO FAR
BEEN LOST IN CRASH NEAR DEBRE BERHAN UNRELATED TO
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PAGE 03 ADDIS 05133 260655Z

FIGHTING.)

4. VON MUENCHOW LEARNED DURING CONVERSATION WITH GDR
MILITARY ATTACHE IN ADEN, WHO VISITED ADDIS IN JULY,
THAT CUBAN MILITARY ATTACHE JOINED STAFF OF CUBAN EM-
BASSY HERE IN MID-JULY, AND THAT GDR MILITARY ATTACHE
TO BE ADDED TO ADDIS EMBASSY STAFF SOME TIME IN SEPTEM-
BER. NAMES NOT YET AVAILABLE.
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